Stop Feeling Sorry for Me by BlueRoanSky

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Summary:

Neil's smile was cruel when he looked at the approaching dark clouds and said, "Hope you can walk quickly."

Billy *can* walk quickly, but what's the point? He has nowhere to go.

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

> Well, I wasn't going to post this as a chaptered fic, but I started writing it late and got too tired to finish it, so I figured I'd post what I have so far. There should only be one more chapter after this, which will hopefully be up by tomorrow.
>
> This one is set some time after *Don't Touch Me* and *Now I'm Shaking*, but should be able to be read regardless of if you've read the prior two parts.
>
> Hope you enjoy!

A rainy Sunday afternoon finds Billy walking along a windy street in only jeans and a short-sleeved shirt. He's drenched, his hair plastered to his face and neck, and his clothes soaked through. He can't tell if he's cold or not—if his occasional shivers are from the rain beating against his skin, the anger festering in his muscles, or the fear hurtling through his veins.

He shoves his hands in his pockets and worries his teeth against the cigarette dangling from his lips. It isn't lit—not in this downpour—but it helps to have something that feels normal amongst all the things that are fucked up right now. He would be fine if he had his car, but his dad made sure that that wasn't an option.

Neil's smile was cruel when he looked at the approaching dark clouds and said, "Hope you can walk quickly."

Billy *can* walk quickly, but what's the point? He has nowhere to go.

His shivers come more often now, though his fear dissipates little by little with every step he takes away from that godforsaken house. He can't even feel the bruises anymore, and the sting from the new cut on his cheek has faded. Neither seem like good things, considering his present situation.

The trees give way on his right to reveal a fog-shrouded playground. Billy stops, an almost-endless shudder wracking through him and making his decision before he can really think about how creepy the abandoned park looks. And it's almost certainly abandoned, considering how rundown it all looks. Or maybe hick towns like Hawkins just don't care about kids playing on rusted equipment with paint peeling off the edges.

On the far side of the sand-turned-mud area is a small playhouse. Billy flicks his cigarette away as he passes by the slides, raised platforms, and the swing-set. He has to bend and almost crouch just to get through the playhouse's small, green door, but once inside (huddling on one of the plastic, blue benches like some goblin in a cave), there's instant relief. With the door closed and the windows blocked by the blue shutters, the rain is almost entirely kept out.

Out of the downpour, his wet clothing sticks uncomfortably to his skin, so he peels his shirt off and drops it on his bench. He leans back against the plastic wall behind him and stretches his legs out as far as he can in the limited space. He's still cold, and he feels vulnerable without his shirt on, but it's not like there's anyone around to see.

And that's when the little, green door opens.

#

Twenty minutes ago, Steve was at home.

His house was empty save for himself, as per usual. A list of things he used to do when he had the house to himself ran through his mind (party, drink, smoke, hook up), but it was quickly followed by another list of things he now does when he's home alone (pace, jump at small noises, turn every light on, pace some more, sit on the couch and try to watch TV while his fingers tap and tap and tap and—).

Nineteen minutes ago, Steve left his not-bright-too-bright house for the relative safety of his car. With the road disappearing beneath his tires and the music turned up to block out any noise, he can almost imagine that everything is fine. His fingers only tap on the steering wheel because they're responding to the beat of the music.

Everything's fine.

He turns down yet another winding, tree-lined road that's more familiar to him than the back of his hand. A couple miles down is a park that he used to go to when he was a kid and his parents were still trying to pretend that they gave a shit. He hasn't been back to it in years—mostly because he's older now and people might look at him funny—but the small part of him that misses his parents and the relationship he used to have with them draws him to the park.

It's not like anyone will be there, considering the heaviness of the rain.

But, when he pulls into the parking lot to the side of the park, a figure moving through the fog proves Steve wrong. He parks and waits as the person crosses the playground and enters the yellow playhouse. An image of Steve as a kid playing House with a girl near his age flashes through his mind. She used to pretend to bake pies, and she always wanted to open the windows to put the pies on the windowsill (it was the *proper* way to cool pies), but Steve didn't want the windows open because he hated bugs.

The pies vs. bugs argument was a common thing between them, up until she moved away.

Steve shakes his head and shuts his car off. Someone is in his old playhouse, and it feels like an invasion of privacy. Heedless of the rain, he stalks toward the little, green door and leans down to push it open.

#

"Harrington?" Billy can feel Steve's surprised expression mirrored on his own face, and for a moment, they just blink at each other. Then, Steve shoves himself into the too-small space and sits with his knees up on the damp sand near the door, which he pulls closed.

"What the fuck are *you* doing here, Hargrove?" Steve asks, slicking his wet hair back.

"What the fuck are you doing here, Harrington?" Billy crosses his

arms, suddenly too-aware of his exposed, bruise-mottled skin. “You have a big, fancy house to spend your time in.”

Steve’s eyes drift across Billy’s face and down to his chest and stomach. Billy’s fingers twitch, but he refrains from grabbing his shirt and shoving it on. It’d be too obvious that he’s trying to hide something, which would make it all the more difficult to convince Steve that there’s nothing to hide.

“Didn’t feel like being at home,” Steve says finally. “Was out for a drive, passed by the park, and saw you.”

Billy’s lip curls slightly. “So, you thought you’d come say hi? Share a tiny playhouse? How thoughtful.”

Steve’s eyebrow raises. “Why are you here, then?”

Billy shrugs, looking at the closed window. “Was out for a walk. Wanted to get out of the rain.”

“And you decided a walk during a downpour was a good idea because…?”

“We don’t all have the privilege of a peaceful house,” Billy snaps—and then shuts his mouth so fast, his teeth click together.

Steve’s face softens—only slightly, but enough to show that he gets it. Enough for Billy to see the pity.

Billy hates being pitied.

“Fucking move, Harrington,” he says, and barely gives Steve time to scramble up before Billy’s pushing his way out of the playhouse and back into the relentless rain with his shirt in his hand.

“Hargrove, wai—” Steve says, but Billy doesn’t stop until Steve jogs up to stand in his way. “Where the fuck’re you going?”

“Why do you care?” Billy says, stalking past Steve.

“Because,” Steve says, keeping pace with Billy—but not trying to grab him or get too close, which Billy will *not* think more about, “it’s

raining, it's cold, and you're gonna get sick if you stay out here."

"Again," Billy says, not slowing, "why. do. you. care?"

"I just—" Steve moves into Billy's path again, and Billy jerks to a stop, eyes narrowing. "I was an ass. That day, after you helped me get home."

Billy furrows his eyebrows. "And?"

Steve sighs, making a futile effort to wipe water away from his eyes. "So, would you rather stay out here or come back to my house with me?"

Billy tightens his jaw. "I don't need your fucking pity."

Steve groans. "Damn it, Hargrove, this isn't me pitying you. I'm just trying to— No, I'm not having this fucking conversation out in the damn *rain*." He turns toward the parking lot and says over his shoulder, "Come with me or not. I don't fucking care."

Billy stands still for a few moments, torn between his pride and his desires. In the end, it's not a difficult choice.

It takes him until he reaches Steve's car, but he manages to pull his drenched shirt back on.

#

The drive back to Steve's house is miserable. His wet jeans are stiff, his long-sleeved shirt feels like he poured syrup all over the inside, and he can't seem to stop water dripping into his eyes from his hair. He fights the urge to throw a fit like a toddler and focuses instead on driving.

Billy, for his part, says nothing.

By the time Steve pulls into his driveway, he wants to scratch his own skin off. He slams his car door closed and stomps to his front door, jamming the key into the lock. He doesn't check to see if Billy followed him before he stalks upstairs and grabs towels from the linen closet. He stops in his room long enough to get a change of

clothes for himself and Billy, and then, he heads back downstairs. It's when he finds Billy standing in the entryway just inside the closed door, water dripping from him and onto the floor, face pale, and the bruise and cut standing out lividly on his cheek below his wide eyes, that Steve forgets about his own frustration.

At least for now.

"Here," he says, holding a couple towels and the clothes out to Billy. "You can take a shower upstairs. You could probably use the warmth."

Billy nods, accepting the towels and clothing without a word.

Steve frowns, but he just says, "The bathroom is pretty easy to find. Don't worry about getting water on the carpet. No one's gonna notice."

Billy nods again and disappears upstairs.

When the door latches shut, Steve sighs and runs a hand down his face. He's going to change his clothes, and then, he's going to make some fucking coffee.

2. Chapter 2

Steve's shower is almost too hot, but Billy doesn't turn the temperature down. The water both soothes and irritates his bruises and the cut on his cheek, but he stands under the spray—so different from the freezing rain outside—until the water finally starts to cool. He shuts it off, dries himself with one of the large, fluffy towels Steve gave him, and pulls on the dry clothes. It's a simple short-sleeved shirt and jeans, but they fit surprisingly well and they're not soaking wet. Win-win.

He heads downstairs with his still-dripping clothing in his hands. The scent of coffee lures him to the kitchen, where Steve stands in front of the stove (also in dry clothing), stirring something in a pot. He looks up when Billy pauses by the table.

"You can toss your clothes in the dryer, if you want," Steve says, gesturing toward where Billy assumes he'll find the laundry room. When he returns to the kitchen, Steve is pouring what looks like soup into two bowls.

"Feeding me now, Harrington?" Billy asks, hiding his surprise with snark.

Steve doesn't turn around when he says, "Figured you might be nicer if you're not hungry."

Billy sits in one of the chairs and crosses his arms on the table. "I'm always nice."

Steve snorts. "Yeah, okay." He brings the bowls to the table and sets one down in front of Billy. "You want coffee?"

"You got any alcohol?" Billy asks. The soup is chicken noodle—his favorite, though he doubts Steve knows that.

"The offer is for coffee," Steve says, his tone flat, "not alcohol."

Billy smirks. "Coffee is fine, then. Black."

Steve nods and fills two cups of coffee, adding sugar to one of them.

Billy watches him while he waits for his soup to cool. Not that he'd ever say it out loud, but spending his day in Steve's house is a hell of a lot better than being at the park.

Steve returns with a mug in each hand. He holds one out for Billy to take, and it's when Billy grabs it that Steve's arm catches his notice.

"What the fuck happened there?" Billy asks, his eyebrows shooting up.

Steve frowns. "What?"

"Your fucking *arm*, Harrington. You get mauled by a cat or something?"

Steve freezes, eyes wide. For a moment, Billy isn't sure that Steve is breathing. Then, Steve looks down at his arms, seemingly realizing for the first time that he isn't wearing long sleeves.

The mug falls from his hand, spilling hot coffee as it clatters onto the table.

"Woah, hey!" Billy jumps up, narrowly avoiding the runaway liquid. "What the fuck, Harrington?"

Steve turns abruptly and leaves the kitchen. Billy stares after him for a moment before running a hand through his hair. He finds paper towels on the counter and wipes up the spilled coffee. He finishes just as Steve returns—with long sleeves this time.

Steve pours himself another cup of coffee, not looking at Billy.

"Harrington?" Billy snaps his fingers. "You there, Harrington?"

Steve finally meets Billy's gaze—for a second. "What, Hargrove?" His tone is flat.

Billy gestures around the kitchen. "What the fuck was that all about?"

Steve leans back against the counter. "Nothing."

Billy scoffs. “Nothing? Really? You just enjoy dropping mugs and spilling coffee?”

Steve shrugs. “Drop it, Hargrove.”

“I’m not just gonna—”

“Billy,” Steve says, and it’s the use of his first name that makes Billy stop, “please, drop it.”

Billy stares for a moment. Stress tightens the corners of Steve’s mouth, and the mug in his hand shakes ever so slightly. Billy exhales loudly. “Got any good movies?”

For a moment, Steve doesn’t react. But then, his mouth quirks into a smile. “’Course.”

-

They spend the day watching movies on the couch. It’s the most relaxed Billy’s been in a while, so when the sky darkens and another movie rolls its credits, it takes a monumental effort for him to get up off the couch. He’s already back in his own clothes—having changed earlier once they finished drying—so there’s nothing for him to do now except leave.

He just doesn’t want to.

“You could stay for the night, if you wanted.”

Billy glances at Steve, who’s still sitting on the couch. The unspoken reason for Billy’s reluctance to leave thrums in the tension of Billy’s muscles and hovers in the dark of Steve’s eyes. “I can’t,” Billy says, instead of *please let me stay forever.*

Steve’s lips press together, but he stands. “Let me drive you, at least.”

“No,” Billy says, too quick. He clears his throat. “It’ll be…better. If I walk.”

A question appears in the furrowing of Steve’s eyebrows, but all he says is, “If you’re sure.”

Billy nods, taking a backward step toward the front door. “Yeah, well. See ya.” He lets himself out and is halfway down Steve’s driveway when the front door opens again.

“Hargrove!”

Billy pauses, turning to look back at Steve, who’s stopped just outside his door.

“Come back,” Steve says. His teeth bite into his bottom lip before he adds, “I mean, you can. Come back. If you, uh. If you want.”

Billy forces a smile he doesn’t feel. “Yeah, okay.”

It’s the hardest thing to walk away.

#

Half-past midnight, Steve still can’t sleep. His arms itch, his skin crawls, and he can’t stop picturing the bruises staining Billy’s tanned skin. Despite popular opinion, Steve isn’t stupid. Billy may refuse to admit the truth of the matter, but he doesn’t have to for Steve to be able to put the pieces together.

Or for him to feel guilty about letting Billy return to that house.

Throwing off his blanket, Steve shoves his shoes on and grabs his car keys. It’s a long shot, but maybe he can find Billy out by the quarry again.

He lights a cigarette as he drives—holding it with shaking fingers. The trees slide past on either side of him, and he forcibly doesn’t think about what might be hiding within them. It’s a relief when he nears the quarry—and an even bigger relief when Billy’s Camaro pops into view.

Steve pulls up beside it, his headlights briefly illuminating Billy leaning and smoking against his car. Shutting off the engine, Steve steps out, inhaling a deep breath of smoke and willing himself to be calm. He moves to lean next to Billy, and for a couple minutes, the only sound is the wind scattering the leaves.

“You’re shaking so much, I can hear your bones rattling.”

Steve jumps slightly—unprepared for Billy to speak. “I don’t like the dark,” Steve says, though it’s only half of the reason for his nerves.

Billy snorts as he lights another cigarette for himself. “So I gathered.” He blows smoke into the chilly, night air. “Why’re you out here?”

A dozen excuses fly through Steve’s mind, but his mouth forms the truth before he can think better of it. “Looking for you.”

Billy glances at him. “Looking for me,” he says, slow—like he doesn’t believe it.

Steve nods. His heartbeat pounds in his ears so hard, he feels lightheaded. “Yeah, I—” His voice is unsteady. “I wanted to…tell you. Something.”

“You good, Harrington?”

“Yeah, just.” Steve blows out a breath. “Just nervous.”

“Woah, Harrington, I don’t—”

“It was me,” Steve says in a rush.

The light of the almost full moon is bright enough for Billy’s eyebrows to be visible when they furrow. “What?”

Steve looks at the ground. “The answer to…your question. From earlier.”

Silence—heavy like a lead weight.

Then: “You—” Billy breaks off. “*You* did that to yourself?”

“Yeah, I.” Steve runs a hand through his hair. “It’s like. Drinking. Or smoking. It…helps.”

“Harrington—”

“There’s a reason that I told you,” Steve says, and he looks up now to meet Billy’s wide eyes. His voice is stronger when he says, “I want an

answer from you.”

Billy blinks, and then his jaw tightens.

“It is your dad,” Steve asks, before Billy can say anything, “isn’t it?”

Billy looks away. “You don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Steve turns toward him. “Billy,” he says, and just like earlier, Billy stills. “Be honest. Please.”

Billy drops his cigarette and stamps it out in the dirt. His hands clench into fists, but finally, he sighs. “Yeah,” he says, almost too quiet to hear. “Happy now?”

Steve slides down the side of the car until he’s sitting. “No,” he says, “but I’m glad you told me.”

Billy slides down to sit next to him. “It doesn’t change anything.”

Steve leans his head back, closing his eyes. “Yeah, okay,” he says.

Billy echoes, “Yeah, okay.”

And after a while, in the quiet darkness with Billy at his side, Steve sleeps.

Notes for the Chapter:

> I am so sorry about how long this took to get out! Right after I finished chapter 1, a hurricane became a real issue and completely threw off a couple weeks of my life. I didn't have time to write anything, so I basically forgot where I was planning to go with this story. This is generally the outcome that I kinda intended, but executed very differently from what I think I initially thought. I'm also not sure how well this chapter is written, but I hope you liked it.
>
> Thank you for reading!